

“We were now complete masters of the field”

Ambrose Wright’s Attack on July 2

Matt Atkinson



As the sun dipped below the mountains, 1,400 Georgians from Gen. Ambrose Wright’s brigade emerged from the acrid smoke of the battlefield screaming the Rebel yell. For a moment, a fleeting moment, victory stood within their grasp. In vain did the men peer to the west in search of succor, and in the growing darkness atop Cemetery Ridge, victory slipped away. The aftermath brought repercussions and recriminations from fellow Confederate officers, and today historians still search for answers as to what exactly took place that fateful day, July 2, 1863.

Born April 26, 1826, at Louisville, Georgia, Ambrose Wright rose from poverty through the ranks of Southern society. He studied law under the distinguished Georgia governor and senator Herschel V. Johnson and later became his brother-in-law. Politically, Wright proved to be a moderate Southerner. He ran unsuccessfully for the Georgia legislature and Congress. Nevertheless, he served as a Fillmore elector in 1856 and supported the John Bell and Edward Everett ticket in 1860. Upon Abraham Lincoln’s election, Wright became an ardent supporter of Southern independence. When Georgia exercised its constitutional right to secession, he traveled in company with the state delegation that attempted to woo Maryland. No doubt Wright’s appearance struck many Marylanders as the quintessential backwoods Georgia wild man: He had a long, flowing, dark-brown beard and hair coupled with piercing eyes. In almost every crowd, Wright managed to stand out.¹

In May, 1861, Wright enlisted as a private in the 3rd Georgia Infantry, but his fellow soldiers quickly elevated him to colonel. Wright led his men through the Battle of Seven Pines. Before the end of the bloody Seven Days campaign, Wright received an appointment to command a brigade comprising the 3rd, 22nd, and 48th regiments, as well as the 2nd Battalion of Georgia troops. He continued to lead through the Second Manassas campaign. Severely wounded in the chest and leg while defending the Sunken road at Sharpsburg, he returned to his brigade by the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. In June of 1863 Wright led his battle-hardened brigade of 1,400 men north as part of Richard H. Anderson’s division during the Army of Northern Virginia’s second invasion.²

Bad luck plagued Wright’s march toward Pennsylvania. During the evening, as the brigade crossed the Potomac River at Shepherdstown, one of the pontoon boats capsized, killing several men. Henry Roney recalled:

there was a small light on the bridge, but, while watching, the light suddenly went out and the pontoons sunk midway of the stream, plunging the soldiers in the river encumbered with their guns and accoutrements. I heard awful sounds, screams and groans and exclamations,

such as, 'Turn me loose!' They had evidently caught hold of each other in their efforts to save themselves....³

Shortly after this incident, Wright and his staff crossed Antietam Creek and proceeded to Keedysville, Maryland. Upon entering the town, Union cavalry suddenly surprised their party. Wright's son William had lost a leg at Second Manassas and only recently returned as brigade ordinance officer. As the Confederate officers turned their horses to flee, General Wright called to "his son not to try to follow because he could not ride fast with one leg." The Federal cavalry subsequently overtook Billy Wright. "We all regretted his capture," recalled Alfred Zachary. "He was quite popular in the brigade."⁴

Wright had little time to worry about his son before events reminded him of his own mortality. Near Hagerstown, Maryland, as Wright rode in the rear of the brigade column, shots suddenly rang out from bushwhackers. One of the bullets "cut off some of his long, black, curly hair." Of course, this event exacerbated the Georgia soldiers and they dashed into the woods. "A few shots and suppressed yells told the tale; but the men reported they found no one. We knew what it meant, though," reported one Confederate.⁵

By July 1, Wright's brigade had reached Fayetteville, Pennsylvania. During the morning, the men crossed over South Mountain and made their way to Cashtown. Around 10 A.M., the soldiers turned a curious ear toward the sound of cannon fire coming from the direction of Gettysburg. Anderson's division remained at Cashtown until 1 P.M. before resuming the march. When within six miles of Gettysburg, Wright relinquished command because of "severe indisposition." He wrote "I was very sick all day, and at 2 o'clock, P.M. could no longer sit in my saddle, and had to seek shelter and a bed in a house by the wayside...." Colonel William Gibson of the 48th Georgia assumed command for the remainder of the day and bivouacked the brigade along the Chambersburg pike outside Gettysburg. Wright felt well enough the next day to resume his post.⁶

As the sun rose on July 2, familiar faces greeted Wright's men as fellow Georgians from Brig. Gen. William T. Wofford's brigade filed past the campsite. Anderson's division soon followed with Cadmus Wilcox's Alabamians in the lead and David Lang's Floridian brigade in tandem. Wright complied with orders to follow these men. General Anderson's division comprised the five brigades commanded by generals Wilcox, Lang, Wright, Carnot Posey, and Billy Mahone; men mostly from the deep Southern states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi, respectively, with Mahone's Virginians. Anderson deployed his division in the aforementioned order from south to north. His front measured roughly 1,750 yards along the brow and swales of Seminary Ridge.⁷

General Anderson personally conducted Wright's brigade to their new position along the line where they relieved Joseph Davis' Mississippi Brigade. The Georgians took advantage of the piled rocks left behind by the Mississippians to shelter themselves. Wright deployed Company K of the 3rd Georgia as skirmishers, followed later that afternoon by the entire 2nd Georgia Battalion. Dispositions being complete, the men waited for the coming storm. "While lying there a stray ball came and hit Wiley



General Ambrose R. Wright. LC

J. Pope of our company on the nose, went through and lodged in the back of his neck,” recalled a member of the 22nd Georgia, “he bled profusely, and went to the rear. He had to walk back to Winchester, Va., a distance of 75 miles ... he suffered a great deal” but he survived.⁸

As men in gray and butternut waited in the rising heat, an amusing incident occurred. “The Yankees were shelling ‘Spangler Woods’,” recalled Zachary of the 3rd Georgia, “a red fox was run out and was chased by an artillery company into Wright’s Brigade. We chased him to Thomas’s Brigade, and they it to Lane’s Brigade, which caught and killed it.”⁹

About noon, Anderson informed Wright that an en echelon attack would take place upon the Federal position. General Robert E. Lee’s plan called for an offensive to roll up the Federal left flank with an attack initiated by Gen. James Longstreet’s 1st Corps. Like a row of falling dominoes, Confederate units would enter the assault rolling from south to north. As Union forces shifted reinforcements toward their left flank to meet Longstreet’s attack, Confederate units further up the line could take advantage of any resulting gaps in the defense line. In his after-action report, Wright recalled his instructions for the assault on July 2 to be:

by the whole division, commencing on our right by Wilcox’s brigade, and that each brigade of the division would begin the attack as soon as the brigade on its immediate right commenced the movement. I was instructed to move simultaneously with Perry’s brigade, which was on my right, and informed that Posey’s brigade, on my left, would move forward upon my advance.¹⁰

Around 6 P.M., Wright received the order to move forward. The Georgians debouched over the stone wall and formed on the colors. The brigade line advanced with the 22nd Georgia on the right, the 3rd Georgia in the center, and the 48th Georgia on the left. The 2nd Battalion, posted as skirmishers in front, received orders to fall in on the left of the brigade once the advance reached the forward line. “Owing to the impetuosity of the advance and the length of the line occupied by them,” the 2nd Battalion did not succeed in completely reforming its battle line. Instead, Wright’s three other regiments absorbed the battalion during the charge.¹¹

The brigade had barely emerged from Seminary Ridge when Federal artillery pieces opened fire. Shot and shell raked across the field and exploded around the gray line. One Confederate recalled “... we were greeted by a sheet of fire rolling out from the opposite side, the smoke extending and ascending until it darkened the rays of the sun....”¹²

To their surprise, the Georgians found the ground intersected with hills and hollows. The brigade paused in the first depression to realign its ranks and then continued the advance. “Then we rushed over the next ridge into the succeeding hollow,” Wright recalled, “and thus we worked our way across that terrible field for more than a mile, under the most furious fire of artillery I had ever seen.”¹³

The Georgians’ advance eventually came alongside the skirmish line belonging to the 48th Mississippi of Posey’s brigade. Hallooing their comrades, the Georgians yelled to “Get up and fight” and “Come forward, Mississippians.” “The effect was felt and the entire regiment left its place in the flank and went into action,” recalled Frank Foote, “against the earnest efforts of Col. Jayne to stop them.” The precise number of Mississippians advancing that day with Wright remains unknown. Regardless, Foote’s account suggests that a large number accompanied the Georgians forward.¹⁴

Union troops had not been idle. Around 4 P.M., the flamboyant New York General Dan Sickles had moved the entire 3rd Corps to the high ground along the Emmitsburg road. Andrew Atkinson Humphreys deployed his 5,000-man 3rd Corps division directly fronting west for roughly 900 yards. The division’s left flank rested in the Peach Orchard and the right flank ended 200 yards south of the Codori farm.¹⁵

The Union right flank still did not connect with the rest of the Union 2nd Corps line on Cemetery Ridge. In order to plug the gap, Gen. John Gibbon dispatched the 82nd New York and 15th Massachusetts to the Emmitsburg road. The two regiments, comprising 700 men, deployed in front of and slightly north of the Codori farm buildings with the 82nd New York on left and 15th Massachusetts on the right. Battery B, 1st Rhode Island artillery under the command of Lieutenant [first name] T. Fred Brown supported the line on a slight rise behind the 15th Massachusetts’ right flank. The battery historian recalled their “left was nearest the road with the right extending back to within one hundred yards of the main line, at the stone wall, facing nearly northwest, our line of fire, therefore, was diagonally across the Emmitsburg road toward and to the

left of the Lutheran Technological Seminary.” The left flank of the Union infantry line caused the most concern because a 200-yard gap still ominously existed between the 82nd New York and the end of Humphreys’ line.¹⁶

The veteran blue units quickly tore down fences along the road. They stacked rails on top of each other until a breastwork thirty inches in height stood in their front. The men then resumed their proper place in line, placed cartridges and ramrods on the ground next to them, and prepared for the coming attack. They did not have long to wait.¹⁷

Roland Bowen of the 15th Massachusetts recalled Wright’s approach toward their line:

They sprang forward with their demoniac yell which is peculiar to them only at the same time giving a deadly volley - now it was our turn, with a shout we sprang up on our knees and rested our muskets over the rails, we gave them one of the most destructive volleys I have ever witnessed, unlike us, they had nothing to shield themselves from our fire, and their thinned ranks told that we had dealt out large quantities of death. For a moment they seemed to be suspicious or in doubt as if they had lost their confidence - they hesitated, they reeled, they staggered and wavered slightly, yet there was no panic, as fast as we could get powder and lead into our guns we sent it at them. They returned the compliment pretty effectively.¹⁸

In the end, Wright’s men stood up to the fire. By this time, Humphreys’ division further to the south along the Emmitsburg road had already crumbled. Lang’s Florida Brigade along with the 22nd Georgia entered the gap between Humphreys’ line and the 82nd New York’s left flank, causing the Knickerbockers to start to melt away.¹⁹ Bowen continues:

This of course they knew as every man could see for himself. This inspired them with new courage. Again renewed with vigor they rushed at us dealing death as they approached. We poured our continual storm of lead on them, but they heeded not, on they came - bound to do or die (they did both).²⁰

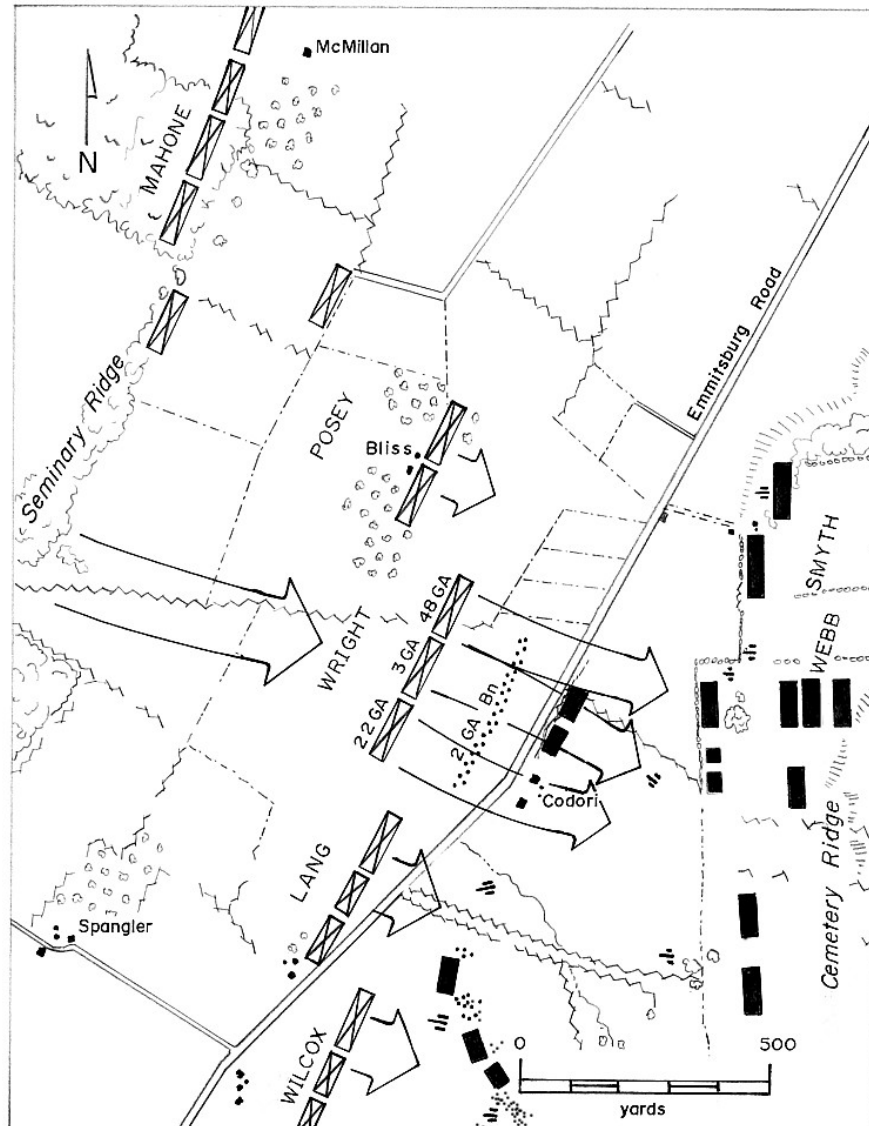
Besides having to fight the Confederates on the front and flank, the two Union units suffered from friendly fire from the rear. Brown’s battery fired canister too low and wounded several men in the back. Utter chaos started to reign along the Union line.²¹



An 1875 photograph looking south along the Emmitsburg Road toward the Codori buildings. GNMP

As the Confederate line closed on the Emmitsburg road, Wright noticed that Posey's Mississippi Brigade had not advanced. Wright sent Captain R. H. Bell to inform Anderson of the situation. Captain Bell returned with orders to press ahead "that Posey had been ordered in on my left, and that he (General Anderson) would reiterate the order."²²

The Georgians closed with the Federals along the Emmitsburg road and hand-to-hand combat broke out. "Captain Corker, with his sword stood on top of a pile of rails," recalled one member of the 3rd Georgia, "thrusting at a burly Federal who tried to jab the captain with his bayonet."²³



Wright's brigade overruns the 82nd New York and 15th Massachusetts along the Emmitsburg Road and advances toward Cemetery Ridge.

Colonel George Ward, commander of the 15th Massachusetts, being the senior commander, took charge of the two regiments before the fight began. He had positioned himself "beside a fence to the right of the Codori house" balanced on a cane while directing his men with a sword in the other hand. As the New Yorkers started to disintegrate, Ward turned to his adjutant and issued the order for withdrawal. At that moment, he received a mortal wound from a Confederate bullet that slammed into his sound leg and dropped him to the ground.²⁴

With Confederates engulfing the line, it became every man for himself among the Union troops.

Hundreds of blue clad soldiers dodged and weaved around the Codori farm buildings in an attempt to escape the onrushing Georgians. A member of the 48th Georgia recalled:

As we were in the charge I had an old U. S. Musket that would not shoot, but seeing a wild yankee lying in a ditch in the pike road with a fine rifle I asked him it was any good, he said that it was, I told him to take off his belt and cartridge box and give it to me, which he did. I cut off my old belt, cartridge box and shoulder strap with my jack knife, put on the yankee accoutrements, took his rifle and went to the charge.²⁵

During the entire melee along the Emmitsburg road, Brown's Battery B of the 1st Rhode Island attempted to lend support by firing over their comrades' heads. The left and center sections (four guns) of the battery shifted from the northwest to roughly west/southwest and fired with spherical case with four second fuses. "The enemy were in solid front of two lines of battle," recalled the battery historian, "As our artillery fire cut down their men they would waver for a second, only to soon close up and continue their advance, with their battle flags flying in the breeze, and the barrels of their muskets reflecting the sun's dazzling rays."²⁶

As Wright's men overran the Union infantry along Emmitsburg road, the cannoneers cut their fuses from three- to two- to one-second fuses and finally resorted to canister and then double canister. One round of canister found Color Sergeant Alexander Langston of the 3rd Georgia and drove his waist belt buckle into his abdomen. Langston was dead before he hit the ground; the first color bearer lost in the war by the 3rd Georgia. Capt. Charles H. Andrews, commander of the left wing of the regiment and Adjutant Sam Alexander encountered some difficulty in wrenching the colors from the dead man's hands. Alexander eventually succeeded and bore the standard forward.²⁷

Brown's exposed guns now became an inviting target, and the Confederates surged ahead. Lieutenant Brown issued the order for the guns to limber to the rear. Sgt. Albert Straight, chief of the number four gun, decided to give the Georgians one more parting shot. The Georgians subsequently shot two of the horses, and Union soldiers could not remove the gun from the field. Straight ordered his men to take care of themselves and the cannoneers scattered. In the melee, the Georgians managed to capture another piece also.²⁸

The other four cannon of Brown's battery also encountered difficulty. The stone wall along Cemetery Ridge only had one small opening for the artillery to pass through. In their haste to get away, the number three and five guns became jammed in the opening. While members of the sixth piece waited for the opening to clear, Confederates shot several of their horses and forced the abandonment of this gun as well. The rest of the artillery escaped direct capture. "Onward they came," recalled one Union officer, "and absolutely seized upon the cannon."²⁹

Gen. Alexander Webb deployed his brigade near the crest of Cemetery Ridge. The 69th Pennsylvania Infantry from his brigade crouched behind the stone wall along the crest with the regiment's left flank resting roughly in front of the famous "copse of trees." The rest of Webb's brigade, the 71st, 72nd, and 106th Pennsylvania, sought cover on the reverse slope of the ridge. Connecting and extending the 69th Pennsylvania were two small regiments, the 59th New York and the 7th Michigan, from Gen. Norman J. Hall's brigade. Hall positioned the 20th Massachusetts in reserve behind the two smaller regiments.³⁰

Howling the famous Rebel yell, the Georgians closed with the foe. The historian of the 69th Pennsylvania recalled "Wright's Georgia Brigade made a furious assault, advancing obliquely from our left front, forcing Brown's Rhode Island Battery ... from its position in front of the regiment."³¹ Georgian William Judkins recalled this moment during the charge:

Balls never flew thicker that they did there, and that is the only battle I was in where I know that I shot a man. A yank was about one hundred yards from me, he shot at me, I took a rest off a piece of artillery, and shot the yank in the arm- for he dropped his gun, and I saw his arm fall limp by his side. He ran for all he was worth, I took two shots with a rest off of an artillery wheel at a yankee officer. He was on a horse but I never hit him for he did not flinch, stop or appear to notice my shots, he was not over 100 yards from me.³²

On the Confederate left flank, the 48th Georgia rushed toward the 59th New York and a portion of the 69th Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvanians fired volley after volley to the left oblique at the mass of Georgians advancing in the twilight. “One man, Clarke of Co. D,” recalled a soldier of the 3rd Georgia, “was killed as he sat astride of a gun loading and shooting.”³³

Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, commander of the Union 2nd Corps, seeing the Confederate line closing, ordered forward the reserves of Webb’s brigade. The 71st Pennsylvania bolstered the battle line of the 69th Pennsylvania while the 106th added the weight of its firepower to the right and center while extending the right flank slightly.³⁴

The pinnacle of Wright’s charge now occurred. A 69th Pennsylvania veteran wrote:

... on come the mad Georgians until they reach point blank range of our rifles. We met their charge with such a destroying fire that they were forced back in confusion. They rally again and make a second effort, and again are their lines broken and thinned as we pour volley upon volley into their disordered lines, until they finally retire a dispirited mob, not even able to take Brown’s abandoned guns, which they twice succeeded in reaching.³⁵

Further to the south along the Union line, the 7th Michigan began a “rapid and destructive fire” also. The 3rd and 22nd Georgia took shelter “where partially protected by rocks and shrubs, they continued to pour in a galling fire.” By this time, the surviving members of Brown’s Rhode Island Battery had redeployed the remaining guns a few paces behind the Michiganders. In desperation, the cannoneers cut loose a round “blowing a gap, and severely burning several men” in a friendly fire accident.³⁶

Seeing Brown’s disabled guns in front, the Georgians rushed toward the prize. One of the regimental color bearers planted the Confederate battle flag atop one of the cannons and momentarily took possession of some of the guns. Union division commander John Gibbon wrote, “the enemy came on with such impetuosity that the head of his column came quite through a vacancy in our line to the left of my division” Wright’s men had done it! They had reached Cemetery Ridge. “We were now complete masters of the field,” recalled General Wright, “having gained the key, as it were, of the enemy’s whole line.”³⁷

Wright’s success proved fleeting. The commander of the 7th Michigan recalled delivering “a deadly volley at not more than thirty yards distance. Their color bearer fell, pierced by a dozen bullets. Many others were killed or wounded, and they were forced to fall back to their cover, and the battery was saved.”³⁸

The Georgians now found themselves in a predicament. On their right, Perry’s Floridians had halted to reform after crossing the Emmitsburg road; on their left, Posey’s Mississippians had failed to advance in any great numbers. “Thus, Wright’s Brigade was driven into the Federal position like a wedge,” recalled a 3rd Georgian, “and was exposed on the right, and on the left.” General Wright was livid! He wrote “thus we were perfectly isolated from any portion of our army, a mile in its advance, and although we had gained the enemy’s works and captured his guns, we were about to be sacrificed to the bad management and cowardly conduct of others.”³⁹

Union troops reacted quickly to the faltering Georgians. Colonel William L. Curry of the 106th Pennsylvania ordered a charge and “with a cheer” the Union line surged toward the Emmitsburg road and Brown’s abandoned guns. Members of the 71st Pennsylvania joined in the attack also but they advanced parallel with the Emmitsburg road. Simultaneously, the 13th Vermont Infantry arrived on the Union left and quickly started to turn the Georgians’ flank. The advance had an effect much like sweeping dust before a broom.⁴⁰

It appeared to Wright that the two forces on his flanks would simply surround his brigade. Wright reported:

We were now in a critical condition. The enemy’s converging line was rapidly closing upon our rear; a few moments more, and we would be completely surrounded; still no support

could be seen coming to our assistance, and with painful hearts we abandoned our captured guns, faced about, and prepared to cut our way through the closing lines in our rear.⁴¹

Earlier, after overrunning Brown's battery, several Georgians attempted to turn one of the cannons upon the blue mass along Cemetery Ridge. One Georgian even recalled a captured piece being successfully fired at their former owners. Union General Abner Doubleday recalled Webb's brigade fired "two staggering volleys from behind a fence" and then "... charged, regained the lost piece and turned it upon them." Major George W. Ross, commanding the 2nd Georgia Battalion, suffered a mortal wound while trying to remove some of the captured pieces from the field.⁴²

As the 106th and 71st Pennsylvania charged forward, Wright's men faced a precarious situation that forced to decide between flight or surrender. Scores of Georgians chose the latter. Major Sylvanus W. Curtis of the 7th Michigan recorded that "during the hottest of the firing many of the enemy were seen to throw down their guns, and, creeping along the ground to our lines, surrendered as prisoners."⁴³

Union flank attacks forced the gray line to yield ground. Frank Foote of the 48th Mississippi, who went the whole distance with the Georgians, recorded this moment of the attack:

An attempt was made to reform the line, but before it could be done a heavy column of infantry in blue came up at double quick; we were too detached to cope successfully with them, and in a moment we were hurled, bleeding and crippled, from our hard-won trophies. Wright's men, with whom we still were, began to fall back, and then came the dreadful part of the whole matter – a falling back across the wide, open fields, with an exultant enemy thundering at our heels with every contrivance of death.⁴⁴

Captain Andrews felt his regiment, the 3rd Georgia, lost more in the retreat than in the attack, "particularly in prisoners." "The men were much exhausted," he explained, "by the rapid advance over nearly a mile of ground, the terrific fighting under a July sun, and the rapid retreat had exhausted many who fell into the hands of the enemy."⁴⁵

Adjutant Alexander, the gallant soldier who had borne the 3rd Georgia flag forward from the Emmitsburg road, received a severe wound during the retreat. Before collapsing, Alexander leaned the flag up against a captured piece of cannon. T. J. Hinsey grasped the colors and a soldier named Edmund J. Horton promised to defend them with his Whitworth rifle on the retreat. The two successfully made it back to the main Confederate line with their keep.⁴⁶

The 106th Pennsylvania continued its advance until almost reaching the Emmitsburg road. The Federals spied a large force of Georgians located behind the Codori house and barn. Soon Captain Claiborne Snead of the 3rd Georgia emerged waving a white handkerchief and approached the Pennsylvania line. Colonel Curry detailed Captain Robert H. Ford and Company I to meet the flag of truce. The Georgia captain stated that Col. William Gibson, of the 48th Georgia, lay severely wounded and he desired the colonel brought into the Union lines for treatment. Captain Ford acquiesced but required the Georgians to surrender first. "This Captain Snead very much objected to do, and wished to be allowed to return to their lines; saying they only wanted to have their Colonel attended to, and ought not to be made prisoners." The dastardly Yankee insisted the Confederates surrender and he returned to the main line with an armful of swords followed by a large body of prisoners.⁴⁷

In front of Cemetery Ridge, Union soldiers regrouped and began to gather the wounded from the battlefield. One Pennsylvanian remarked that Wright's men were "the best clothed soldiers that we had ever come across on their side." In the twilight, Union soldiers also recovered the guns and ammunition of the dead. They found them to be smoothbore muskets with "buck and ball" manufactured in England.⁴⁸

Scattered groups of gray-clad survivors made their way across the fields. Some soldiers helped wounded comrades while others simply wandered aimlessly toward Seminary Ridge. The surge of

adrenalin caused by the shock of combat had faded and now they were a tired and disorganized mass. It was over.

General Wright halted the majority of the survivors in a small ravine to the west of the Emmitsburg road. There were a lot fewer to reform now. Out of the 1,400 men who entered the assault, half had not returned.⁴⁹

The casualty rate among the officers of Wright's brigade reached epic proportions. Colonel Joseph Wasden, commander of the 22nd Georgia, fell near the Emmitsburg road. The 2nd Georgia Battalion's leader, Maj. George W. Ross, subsequently died from the wounds received during the charge. Col. Gibson of the 48th Georgia survived but suffered through Union imprisonment for the next eight months. "Of all the field officers engaged in this fearful assault, Col. [Edward J.] Walker alone came out untouched," General Wright reported. "One Captain and one Lieutenant are all the officers left in the 2nd Battalion In the 3d Ga., out of seven Captains who went into the fight, all have fallen but two. The loss is equally great in the 48th and 22d."⁵⁰

Amidst all the sadness and confusion attending the aftermath of this charge, a brief moment of levity occurred. Brandishing his sword over his head, Capt. Charles Whitehead rode toward the line shouting "Rally, Georgians, rally!" As he reined his horse in from a gallop, the saddle girth "gave way" and sent the captain tumbling to the ground. The Georgians saluted him with a yell.⁵¹

The controversy surrounding the Georgians' attack started almost as soon as the charge stopped. Most of the controversy centers on Ambrose Wright himself. Wright's nature did not suffer others' shortcomings well and, in his view, Dick Anderson had shortcomings that needed addressing. With a lawyer's prose, Wright set about to ensure the record stood clear. In carrying on this crusade, he succeeded in clouding the record even further.

Many historians have questioned Wright's claim to have penetrated the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge. In his after-action report, he wrote:

My men, by a well directed fire, soon drove the cannoneers from their guns, and, leaping over the fence, charged up to the top of the crest, and drove the enemy's infantry into a rocky gorge on the eastern slope of the heights, and some 80 or 100 yards in rear of the enemy's batteries.⁵²

Furthermore, in a letter printed in the newspapers, Wright contended that his men had climbed "up the side of the mountain...." He further claimed "the side of the mountain was so precipitous here that the men could with difficulty climb it" Gettysburg historian Edwin Coddington found Wright "literally beyond belief." Coddington and noted historian Harry Pfanz attributed Wright's perceptions to a lack of familiarity with the terrain, heavy smoke from the battlefield, and the setting sun. These factors are all very plausible and probably true to a certain extent. However, Wright's crusade against Anderson may have caused the general to exaggerate also.⁵³

Wright's description has led to speculation about whether he actually commanded the brigade during the attack, and some evidence exists to support this claim. As stated earlier, Wright suffered during the march to Gettysburg from a mysterious ailment. Furthermore, Capt. Victor Girardey, Wright's assistant adjutant-general, possessed enough military skill to have led the brigade. The primary source for this account is Georgian William Judkins. He recorded that "we started on the charge, Genl Wright in command, but was not in charge, he was not well, but his Adjutant Genl. Geroda (sic) was in command, or led the brigade." On the other hand, Judkins' recollection of events is easy to discount. After all, he wrote them in the post-war period. Judkins could also have been confused on his time periods. Captain Girardey took half of the brigade command during a rear guard action at Manassas Gap on the retreat from Gettysburg and this may have confused Judkins' memory. In addition, Wright's report, for all its flaws, also lends creditability to the general being in charge. He wrote sentences such as "*I* had observed that Posey's brigade... had not advanced..." "*I* dispatched my aide-de-camp ... with a message..." and "*I* received a reply to press on..." and not a single Confederate ever challenged his version of events.⁵⁴ Wright's solicitation of the Confederate War Department to promote a lieutenant involved at the fight in Gettysburg provides another clue:

I ordered the brigade to halt & reform in slight (ravine) in a wheat field just out of range of the enemy's grape & canister, although we were under a very hot fire of musketry. In personally superintending this rally of the men I found the 2nd Ga. Bat without a single officer ... and took charge of it in person.⁵⁵

Unless new documents come to light, historians will probably never know Wright's exact whereabouts. Nevertheless, the evidence, though scant, supports him being with the brigade until close to the Emmitsburg road.

The question of "did Wright break through?" poses an even greater conundrum. Coddington found no evidence in Union reports of a Confederate breakthrough along Cemetery Ridge. Conversely, Pfanz looked at the same sources and concluded that Wright had broken through. "The important thing," he wrote, "is not Wright's fanciful description of the terrain but that the Georgians did go beyond the wall that marked the main line of Gibbon's division on to the crest of the ridge." In this instance, both writers are correct to a certain extent. John Buckley of the 69th Pennsylvania stated "the rebs... did not reach the wall." The 106th Pennsylvania's regimental history recorded the Georgians being within sixty yards of the position when his comrades began firing. In no instance, on either side, is there a mention of hand-to-hand combat. Therefore Wright's left flank did not breach the enemy's line near the copse of trees. The right flank of the attack however presents a different picture.⁵⁶

The 22nd Georgia comprised the right flank of Wright's brigade and in this area the Georgians momentarily broke through. Maj. Sylvanus Curtis of the 7th Michigan, whose command formed the Union left flank on Cemetery Ridge, reported his men fired to their left oblique. At that moment, Wright's men were attempting to seize the remnants of Brown's battery abandoned near the stone wall. Union division commander Gen. John Gibbon wrote the most definitive statement supporting a Georgian breakthrough: "The enemy came on with such impetuosity that the head of his column came quite through a vacancy in our line to the left of my division" The number of Georgians who crossed the wall is unknown but, regardless, they could have only held the position for a minimum amount of time. Nevertheless, they did cross the wall.⁵⁷

In the end, the most pertinent question surrounding Wright's brigade is "why did the assault fail?" and the obvious answer lies in the lack of support. Out of the five brigades composing Richard Anderson's division, only three brigades, Wilcox, Lang, and Wright, were engaged on July 2. As previously stated, Wright reported to Anderson during the assault that Posey's brigade had not advanced on his left. Anderson responded with a message to push forward that Posey would close shortly. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox sent a similar plea regarding reinforcements to which Anderson responded "tell Genl. Wilcox to hold his own, that things will change."⁵⁸

Peter Wellington Alexander, correspondent for the *Savannah Republican*, penned an article that created much controversy after the battle. The article stated in part:

But Posey, who was to move next in order, was unwilling, it is reported, to advance, contending that his left flank would be uncovered, and that Mahone should move first. Mahone, on the other hand, declined to proceed unless Posey and [William D.] Pender's division on his left should do so at the same time. Upon this fact being made known to Pender he rode forward to examine the ground, when he received a wound and was disabled. The question then arose among his Brigadiers as to who was the senior officer, and this point was not settled until about sunset.⁵⁹

For his part, Anderson passed all blame for the lack of support to his superior Gen. Ambrose Powell Hill. He contended that Hill wanted Posey and Mahone's brigades held in reserve. If this is true, then Anderson failed to transmit this information to the other three brigades of his division. Although Posey's Mississippians eventually moved forward, the advance did not arrive in time to aid Wright's attack.⁶⁰

Coordination of the attack clearly rested on Anderson's shoulders. Capt. Walter E. Winn of Wilcox's staff reported that he found Anderson and his staff lounging around in the rear. Anderson had his horse tethered to a tree. He and the rest of the division staff seemed to be disconnected from the events transpiring at the front. Then again, Captain [first name] Shannon of Anderson's staff recalled riding to Mahone with an order

to move forward. Mahone refused to budge, stating that Anderson had ordered his brigade to remain in place. Gettysburg Park Ranger Eric Campbell concluded that:

lack of communication, misunderstanding of orders, apparent uncertainty in their assigned roles and outright disobedience of orders all combined to unravel the division's assault just as its brigades reached the zenith of their attacks.

Historian Harry Pfanz simply stated "something was wrong in Anderson's division that evening."⁶¹

In Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman's epic work *Lee's Lieutenants*, the Army of Northern Virginia historian quoted extensively from an obscure letter written from Ambrose Wright to his wife. In this letter, Wright poured forth all the lurid details of his experience at Gettysburg. Written on July 7, 1863, the letter to "my dear wife" mysteriously appeared in the *Augusta Daily Constitutionalist* without the salutation on July 23, 1863.

Probably as a result of the leaked article, Anderson eventually preferred charges against Wright for "conduct unbecoming an officer," "disrespect to a superior officer," and "violation of orders." The court martial began on August 18, 1863 and resulted in an acquittal. Anderson restored Wright to command on September 22, 1863.⁶²

The following is the first time that the entire letter has been printed. The letter to his wife is denoted by [] brackets and the newspaper translation appears between { } brackets. Unfortunately, Wright's original letter to his wife, as of this date, has disappeared. Freeman cited Wright's grandson as the person who provided a copy for *Lee's Lieutenants*. John Devine of Leesburg, Virginia (since deceased) provided historian Harry Pfanz with a typed transcription for *Gettysburg: The Second Day* and hence this duplicate is used for this article. The editor of the *Savannah Daily Constitutionalist* removed most of the personal pronouns and reworded some sentences.⁶³

Daily Constitutionalist
Augusta, GA.
Thursday Morning, July 23, 1863

Army Correspondence of the Augusta Constitutionalist
From Wright's Brigade

The Battle of Gettysburg – The Battle Ground – First Day's Fight – Order of Battle – Second Day's Fight – Terrible Charge of Wright's Brigade – Enemy's Works Carried – Fruitless Struggle – Third Day's Fight – Massing of Artillery – Terrific Cannonading – Exhaustion of Ammunition – Splendid Charge of Pickett's Division – Cause of it's Failure – Casualties – Conclusion.

First Day's battle
Headq'rs Wright's Brigade
Camp Near Hagerstown, Md.
July 7, 1863

[My Dear Wife]

[We have passed through a most terrific battle, lasting two days, and thank God, I am safe and unhurt. I don't know that this letter will reach you, but knowing your anxiety to hear from me, I have determined to send it and trust to my usual good luck in its getting to you.]

[I wrote you last, I think, on the 27th ult. from Fayetteville, Pa., telling you of the capture of William and my own narrow escape. Since then I have heard nothing from W. but hope that by this time he has been paroled and sent to Richmond.] We lay quietly at Fayetteville until Wednesday, the

1st {of} July, when we took up the march for Gettysburg, Pa., about 25 miles east of Chambersburg, and 20 from Fayetteville; we had to cross South Mountain and pass out of the Cumberland valley into the valley of the Susquehanna. It rained at intervals all day, and we had a most distressing march, going to within two miles of Gettysburg before halting. I was very sick all day, and at 2 o'clock, P.M. could [no] {not} longer sit in my saddle, and had to seek shelter and a bed in house by the wayside, the brigade continuing, as before stated, to within a mile or two of Gettysburg. About 10 or 11 o'clock, A.M., Heath's Division, which was in advance, encountered the enemy some three or four miles from Gettysburg, pretty strongly posted on a range of hills. He soon drove them back for a mile or so, when Pender's Division, also of our Hill's corps, coming up they pressed the enemy vigorously and drove him back to the town. Late in the evening two divisions of Ewell's corps – Early's and Rhodes' – came up on the right of the enemy's line, and drove him into and through the town to a mountain range on the south side of the town, when the fight closed. None of Longstreet's corps, nor our division of Hill's corps, nor Johnson's Division of Ewell's corps, were engaged in this day's fight. The enemy were badly whipped, and driven for more than three miles, with great loss in killed, wounded and prisoners – 3,000 of the latter being taken.

Second Days' Battle

On Thursday morning, July 2d, our whole army having been placed in position, except General Pickett's Division, of Gen. Longstreet's corps, and Johnson's Division, of Ewell's corps, which had not come up, we prepared to attack the enemy, and pushing forward a strong line of skirmishers, we drove in their advance line and found them [snuggly] {strongly} posted on a mountain range – a spur of South Mountain (Blue Ridge) which runs from Gettysburg nearly south. The town being situated at the base of its extreme northern end, their right resting on the crest of the mountain overlooking Gettysburg, and their left resting upon a sharp peak, which rises abruptly from the general elevation of the range several hundred feet, at the distance of about three or four miles from the town. The timber on the east side of the mountain had, except in small patches, been removed, and the slope was in cultivation – the fields yellow with the ripening grain. The valley below was all in cultivation, and varying in width from a mile to a mile and a half, and thickly studded with farm houses and barns. Fronting this range on the west was a long broken and mostly wooded hill, running nearly parallel with the mountain, and a mile and a half to two miles from it; along the west slope of this hill our line was formed. Ewell [on the left, commencing at Gettysburg, Hill in the center and Longstreet on the right. About the middle of the day Ewell] attacked the enemy's right and succeeded in driving them from their first line, but the enemy's position was so strong that he was compelled to fall back. About the middle of the [afternoon] {day,} Longstreet attacked their left with two divisions, Hood's and McLaws', and, soon after Hill's corps was ordered to attack their centre. Anderson's Division, being next to Longstreet's left, was to commence the [fight] {pursuit}, which was to be followed up immediately by Pender's and Heath's Divisions.

At 5 o'clock, Wright's Brigade [I received orders] {was ordered} to advance and charge the enemy's works as soon as the movement commenced on the right. Our Division (Anderson's) was formed thus: Wilcox on the right, (next to McLaws' left,) then Perry, Wright, Posey, Mahone. [Thus you see I had Perry on my right and Posey on my left.] At 5 ½ o'clock, Wilcox advanced, Perry's and [myself] {Wright's Brigades} moving off simultaneously with him. As soon as we emerged from the woods and came into the open fields, the enemy poured a most terrific fire of shells into our ranks. We rushed down the hillside and reaching the valley found it was broken by a series of small ridges and hollows, running parallel with the enemy's line on the mountain; and in the first of these depressions or hollows our line paused for breath. Then we rushed over the next ridge into the succeeding hollow, and thus we worked our way across that terrible field for more than a mile, under the most furious fire of artillery I had ever seen. When we reached the base of the range upon which the enemy were posted, they opened upon us with their infantry, and raked our whole line with grape and canister from more than twenty guns. We were now within a few hundred yards of the enemy's guns, and had up to this time suffered but little loss – the small ridges I have spoken of protecting our

men from the enemy's fire, except as we would pass over their tops, which we always did in a run, thus exposing ourselves but very little to the enemy's fire. But [now] {here} we were in a hot place, and looking to [my] {the} left through the smoke, [I perceived] {it was apparent} that neither Posey nor Mahone had advanced, and that [my] {Wright's} left was wholly unprotected. [I immediately despatched] A courier {was dispatched} to Gen. Anderson informing him of the fact, who answered that both Posey and Mahone had been ordered in, and that he would reiterate the order that [I must] {our Brigade} go on. Before the courier returned, Perry's Brigade on [my] {the} right gave way, and shamefully ran to the rear. [My brigade] {Wright's Brigade} had now climbed up the side of the mountain nearly to the enemy's guns, and being left without support either on the right or left, enabled the enemy to concentrate a heavy fire upon [my small command, but my] {it.} {But} the brave men pressed rapidly and steadily on, until we approached within fifty or sixty yards of the enemy's batteries, when we encountered a heavy body of infantry posted behind a stone fence. The side of the mountain was so precipitous here that the men could with difficulty climb it, but we strove on and reaching the stone fence drove the Yankee infantry from behind it, and then taking cover from the fence we soon shot all the gunners of the enemy's artillery and rushing over the fence seized the guns. We had now accomplished our task – we had stormed the enemy's strong position, had drove off his infantry, had captured all his guns in our front, except a few which he succeeded in [carrying] {running} off, and had up to this moment suffered but comparatively small loss. Just after taking the enemy's batteries, we perceived a heavy column of Yankee infantry on our right flank. They had taken advantage of the gap left in our line by the falling back of Perry's Brigade, and had filed around a piece of timber on our right and had gotten into the gap left by Perry's Brigade, and were rapidly getting into our rear. Posey had not advanced on our left, and a strong body of the enemy [was] {were} advancing down the side of the mountain to gain our left flank and rear. Thus we were perfectly isolated from any portion of our army, a mile in its advance, and although we had gained the enemy's works and captured his guns, we were about to be sacrificed to the bad management and cowardly conduct of others. For a moment [I thought] {it seemed that} all was lost, and that our gallant little band would had been killed [or captured]. Col. Wasden, of the 22d, had been killed, Col. Gibson, of the 48th, seriously wounded, and while at the enemy's guns with his hands on the [horses] {hausse,} Major Ross, of the 2d Battalion, had just been shot down, and nearly all [my] {the} company officers were killed or wounded. Everything looked gloomy in the extreme, but the men remained firm and cool to the last. The enemy had now got completely in our rear, and were advancing upon us over the very ground we had passed in attacking them. A large force was concentrated in our front and artillery brought into position and opened upon us. [Then was a prayer said.] {There was a hope still.} We must face about and cut our way out of the net-work of bristling bayonets which stretched around us on every side. With cheer[s] and in good order we turned our faces to the enemy in our rear, and abandoning our captured guns we rushed upon the flanking column of the enemy and literally cut our way out, and fell back about one-half the distance we had gone over, and [then] {there} reformed our line. But alas, very few of the brave spirits who so recently had passed over that line, buoyant in spirit and confident of success, now answered to the order that calmly [sang] {rang} out upon the air "fall in Wright's Brigade, and here we'll stand again." Of over 1,600 that went into the fight, 554 were all that answered to that summons. What a loss! More than 1,000 men in a small Brigade, killed, wounded, and taken prisoner. I hope and believe that quite a number were captured uninjured, and particularly so in the 48th and 2d Battalion, as they were completely surrounded and somewhat detached from the balance of the Brigade. A great many of our wounded were necessarily left in the enemy's hands as we had to fall back too rapidly to permit our bringing them off. I do not recollect an instance in ancient or modern warfare where so small a body of troops, entirely unsupported, as this Brigade was, has accomplished [so] {as} as much; charging through an open field for more than a mile; attacking a vastly superior force strongly posted on a mountain, climbing the side of the mountain, driving the enemy's infantry from behind a stone wall, shooting off the gunners and capturing twenty pieces of artillery, than when completely surrounded by swarms of the enemy's infantry, literally cutting their way out and retiring

in good order, preventing the enemy from pursuing them. This Wright's Brigade has done, and the fear-scourning heroes may well be proud of their achievement.

Although I know their character well; [well] knew they were capable of doing what any other troops dare do, I must confess that I was surprised at the vigor of their attack and the tenacity with which they held their ground under such adverse circumstances; and above all, at the true heroism displayed in their determination not to be captured, when the enemy's lines were drawn completely around them. Of all the field officers engaged in this fearful assault, Col Walker alone came out untouched. One Captain and one Lieutenant are all the officers left in the 2d Battalion, the balance either killed or wounded. In the 3d Ga., out of seven Captains who went into the fight, all have fallen but two. The loss is equally great in the 48th and 22d. Each regiment lost its Adjutant, though I hope some are mortally wounded. Adjutant Cumming, of the 48th, is in the hands of the enemy, his wound is not a dangerous one. So is Adjutant Daniels, of the 22d, who is reported dangerously wounded. No troops were ever led by braver men than the gallant officers who led this charge. Many instances of individual bravery occurred, which I would gladly give you, but it would swell my letter into too large proportion. Their country will do them justice when the history of this campaign is written.

But while our loss is heavy, we are gratified to know that the enemy's is ten-fold greater. Their dead lay in piles around their guns, and the mountain side from the foot of the slope to the summit was literally covered with their dead and wounded. While our Brigade was thus contending in the centre two divisions of Longstreet's corps were vigorously pushing [those] {them} on our right. I learn that Hood and McLaws drove the enemy for some distance, inflicting considerable loss but were unable to dislodge them from their strong, inner line on the crest of the mountain. Wilcox also, in our division, drove them for some distance and would no doubt have succeeded in getting into their stronghold had not Perry's Brigade, which was on his left, (our right) [given] {gave} way in the manner in which I have already described.

Night now having set in, the battle closed, and the survivors of that bloody day were engaged until nearly dawn in bringing out and taking care of their wounded comrades. I need not tell you that sleep was not thought of by [me] {us} on that night.

Third Day's Battle

Early next morning 55 pieces of artillery were placed in position just in front of the right of our Brigade and sixty odd pieces put in position on my left. Pickett's Division of Longstreet's corps and Johnson's Division of Ewell's corps had come up during the night, and were put in position in their respective corps. I heard that a general attack was to be made along our whole line, first making feints upon the enemy's extreme right and left flanks, and then concentrating the fire of 120 guns which I have just spoken of, on their centre, to make a vigorous assault with a heavy fire upon that portion of their line, (the centre) which we had carried the day before. All the arrangements having been made, and the different commands in position at ten minutes before 1 P.M., our batteries opened fire. Never before have I witnessed or heard such a cannonade. The earth fairly trembled under the shoes, as peal after peal in rapid succession rolled along the mountainside. Then the enemy's guns opened, some seventy-five or a hundred. My heavens! You can't imagine the noise – the trembling of the [earth] {leaves} – the rocking of the hills – the awful reverberation from the mountain side. Then the enemy's guns opened, some seventy-five or a hundred. My heavens! you can't imagine the noise – the trembling of the leaves – the rocking of the hills – the awful reverberation from the mountain side – the sullen roar which continuously rolled along the beneath – the shrieking of the shells as they came thick as hail, around, above and below you – everywhere the air was filled with hideous noise[s], the bursting of shells, the incessant cracking and crashing of falling trees and boughs which were cut down by solid shot. The pattering of shrapnel as they were literally poured along our whole line, combined to make a scene, which once witnessed can never be forgotten, and which no pen, however gifted, can adequately describe. God grant that I may never witness such another. And thus, for one hour and a half the fire continued, during which time nearly

all the enemy's guns were silenced. Now the infantry is brought up for the assault, Pickett's Division in advance, then Heth's, (now commanded by Gen. Pettigrew, [senior Brigadier]) in echelon on the left. On the men swept. Our Brigade being held in reserve, enabled [me] {us} to take a position where [I] {we} had a [fine] {fair} view of the whole field, and I am sure that I have never seen troops start better than this storming party did. Pickett pushed firmly and steadily forward, going over the identical ground our Brigade had passed the day before. Pettigrew followed in fine order. Our artillery now ceased firing, and upon inquiry, I learned they [have] {had} exhausted their ammunition! And at such a time! There is Pickett and Pettigrew half across the valley; the enemy have run up new guns and are pouring a deadly fire into their ranks – the enemy's infantry have opened upon them – they fall on every side - Generals, Colonels, Captains, Lieutenants, privates, as thick as autumn leaves they strew the plain. And our guns, will they not re-open? Is there no succor for those brave spirits who are so nobly and steadily bearing their country's flag in that terrible fight? Surely our artillery will help them now – this is the crisis! My God! All is as silent as death along our whole line of artillery; one hundred and twenty pieces of cannon standing [still] {mute} and dumb while the very flower of the Confederate army is grappling on unequal terms in a struggle of life and death with an enemy strongly posted in a mountain fastness, and admirably protected by well [seasoned] {served} artillery. I ask myself, "can they stand this fire much longer?" and I [saw] {see} Pickett still vigorously pushing on, [delivering] {dealing} a deadly fire at every step. The enemy fell back from his front – they take shelter behind the stonewall still Pickett advances. On the left Pettigrew's line wavers – it pauses – all is lost – it falls back – it runs. Some of the officers attempt to rally their men, {but a great many are scampering away in front of their men;} helter-skelter, pell-mell, here they come. But one thought seems to actuate them all, and that is to gain a safe place [far] in the rear. Pickett left alone, still rushes forward upon the enemy – he has gained the stone wall – has gone over it – is in the enemy's wake – has silenced their guns. I can see with my glass our battle flags waving in the enemy's [battle line] {batteries}, [when] {where} but a moment since the Yankee colors floated in the breeze. Take care, brave Virginian, you are in a trap; the support on your right and left has fallen back. Our Brigade was caught there yesterday, and there upon their right a heavy column of Yankee infantry is deploying around a point of woods to gain their rear – it is done – they are surrounded. They now attempt to cut their way out, but many are killed and wounded, and many [have been] {more are} taken prisoners. I [saw their] {learn that a} stand of colors fell into the enemy's hands, and the greater part of [their] {the} regiments. And thus again after whipping the enemy, after driving him [forward] {from} and capturing his guns, our gallant men are driven back because they were not properly supported. [General] {Seeing} Pickett falling back with the enemy pursuing, without orders, [I took my brigade in to] {Wright's Brigade went to} his support, and protected his retreat. In this movement [I] {we} lost several men, including Lieut. Rice, of Capt. Sneed's company, who lost a leg, and Lieut. Bell, of Capt. Corker's company, who also lost a leg by a Yankee shell.

While this attack was being made on the enemy's centre, Hood's and McLaw's Divisions were thundering away on his right, inflicting heavy loss upon the enemy. I cannot understand why Ewell's corps and all of A. P. Hill's were not engaged in this day's fighting. I am satisfied that if they had, {been,} our victory would have been complete. As it was, while we inflicted terrible loss upon the enemy – greatly larger than our own – we failed to carry his position. We captured in the two days fighting between ten and twelve thousand prisoners, and I have no doubt that their loss in killed and wounded amounts to over thirty thousand. Still we did not carry their works, and we cannot fairly claim any decided victory.

Our loss has been quite heavy – principally sustained in the charge of our brigade on the 2d, and Pickett's Division on the 3rd. Wilcox's brigade also suffered heavy loss on the 2d.

Among our killed and wounded we have seventeen Generals: Major Generals Hood, [wounded] in arm; Pender, in leg; Heath, in head, {neither very seriously;} Trimble, in leg, which has been amputated. [The three first mentioned not wounded very seriously.] {and} Brig. Gen's Garnet, Kemper and Barksdale, were killed; and Brig. Gen's Armistead, Scales, Semmes, Archer, and

Hampton, wounded. I learn that five other Brig. Gen's were wounded, but do not recollect their names.

On Saturday, the fourth, there was no general engagement. Indeed, both armies seemed to need and take rest. During Friday night, which was rainy and dark, considerable noise was heard in the enemy's lines, as though he was moving off, and which continued during the day (Saturday). He seemed to be moving to the rear of his left, and in the direction of Frederick City or Boonsboro. On Saturday evening our army commenced moving, and marched for this place; I suppose with the view of check-mating the enemy's change of base.

All our army is now here in good condition, (except a scarcity of artillery ammunition) and in fine spirits. The last came up to-day, and are now going into camp as I write.

What our next movement will be I cannot tell; but I think that as soon as we get our ammunition supplied, we shall march in the direction of Washington. We have had a great deal of rain since Saturday; it has been pouring all day and still continues, and there is some danger that our pontoons at Williamsport may be carried away; and if they should, before we get our supplies of ammunition, we shall be in a bad box. This incessant rain may compel Gen. Lee to re-cross the Potomac tomorrow or next day, but I hope not.

My letter has been so much devoted to our Gettysburg fight that I have neglected to tell you all our army has done, and where it has been, since we came into the enemy's country. {I must reserve that for another letter, when, if my duties permit, I will give you an account of our invasion campaign.}⁶⁴ You have perhaps learned from the newspapers our line of march – that we crossed the Potomac in two columns – one at Williamsport and one at Sheppardstown. We then marched to Hagerstown, Md. From there to Green Castle, Pa. where we captured a large quantity of supplies, and horses. From there to Chambersburg, Pa. a town of some ten or twelve thousand inhabitants. General Ewell went from here to Carlisle where he encountered the Pennsylvania Militia, routed them – capturing a few. From there he moved East to York, where again he met the Militia, dispersed them and took the town with large quantities of supplies. Longstreet's and Hill's Corps marched from Chambersburg directly to Gettysburg crossing the South Mountain at Thad Stephens Iron Works which were completely destroyed.

Stuart's and Baker's Cavalry have been very active and have annoyed the enemy very much. On Friday Stuart captured a wagon train of 250 wagons, and on yesterday had a sharp engagement with the enemy near this place, in which he killed a good many and captured several hundred prisoners. I feel that I have given you a very imperfect sketch of our operations here, and I am afraid you cannot read what I have written, when I have more leisure I may give you a fuller and more intelligible history of our Pennsylvania Campaign.

I have not heard a word from you since I left you at Orange, C. H. I cannot imagine why your brother has not returned. I am going to send to Winchester tomorrow for the mail, and hope to hear from you when the Courier returns.

I have not succeeded yet in getting you anything, but hope to do so tomorrow. Major Hughes has promised to go to town and try and get some shoes, glove and dresses for you if they can be found. I have a fine pair of carriage horses which I got in Pennsylvania, and which I want to send you. I have also a splendid grey horse for William when he returns – one very much like Charlie.

I shall enclose with this a list of casualties in my Brigade which you will furnish to Colonel Cordon. I would tell you to let him see this letter but that it is written so badly. If he desires to use any portion of it – without connecting my name with it as writer – I have no objection – provided he will undertake to correct it.

Give my love and many kisses to Sarah and all the children, and believe me as ever,

Your affectionate and devoted husband,

A. R. Wright.

¹Ezra J. Warner, *General In Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 345; John T. Derry, *Confederate Military History: Georgia*, Clement A. Evans, ed. (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1889; reprint, Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1987), 456-457. This is the same Edward Everett who spoke with Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg.

²Richard N. Current, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1993), 4:1744; John W. Busey and David G. Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg* (Hightstown, New Jersey: Longstreet House, 1994), 294.

³Henry Clay Roney, "Reminiscences of the Experiences of a Boy Soldier in the War Between the States," Carl T. Sutherland, ed., *Richmond County History*, 2:23. Also see: William Brock Judkins, "Memoir of a Civil War Soldier," Georgia Department of Archives and History, Drawer 65, Box 54, 55-56.

⁴Alfred T. Zachary, "Fighting with the 3d Georgia," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, September/October 1994, 74.

⁵Frank H. Foote, "Marching in Clover: A Confederate Brigade's Tramp from the Rappahannock to Gettysburg," *New Annals of the Civil War*, Peter Cozzens and Robert I. Girardi, eds. (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books), 245.

⁶Ambrose R. Wright, "Army Correspondence of the Augusta Constitutionalist," *Daily Constitutionalist*, July 28, 1863; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), Series 1, 27(2):622. [Hereafter cited as *OR*] Over the years Wright's "severe indisposition" has caused much debate, amidst a few snickers, among Gettysburg buffs. His relinquishment of command may very well have resulted from the effects of a steady diet of green apples and corn on the bowel system, not to mention the additional stress and anguish caused by the capture of his son.

⁷*Ibid.*, 614. For a complete overview of Anderson's division's roll in the battle see Eric A. Campbell, "Sacrificed to the bad management... of others: Richard H. Anderson's Division at the Battle of Gettysburg," *High Water Mark: The Army of Northern Virginia in the Gettysburg Campaign – Programs of the Seventh Annual Gettysburg Seminar* (n.p., n.d.).

⁸John W. Lindsey and Charles H. Andrews, "Third Georgia Regiment: History of its Campaigns From April 26th, 1861 to April 9th, 1865," *The Weekly Madisonian*, 25 April 1890, Chapter 33; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):622, 630; Judkins, 57.

⁹Zachary, 77.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 622.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 623, 630. Wright and several of his regimental commanders state the advance time as 5 P.M. If Barksdale's attack occurs between 5:30 and 6 P.M., the author finds it incredible that Wright could have advanced at the time stated in his report.

"The 2nd Battalion commander stated that "in the absence of orders, or any definite instructions in the event of an advance of our forces, the skirmishers did not assemble, but went forward with the line as it moved past them." This statement is entirely at odds with Wright's brigade report."

¹²Claiborne Snead to R. W. Doughtart, May 13, 1905. Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park collection.

¹³Wright, "Army Correspondence."

¹⁴Foote, 281.

¹⁵John Heiser, "Action on the Emmitsburg Road," *Gettysburg Magazine*, Issue Number 1, 79 -80.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 81; John B. Rhodes, *The History of Battery B, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery in the War to Preserve the Union 1861 – 1865* (Providence: Snow and Farnham, 1894), 201.

¹⁷Roland Edwin Bowen, "From the Round Top to Richmond or a narrative of 39 days," 15th Massachusetts Infantry Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park collection, 5.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹Andrew E. Ford, *The Story of the Fifteenth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War 1861- 1864* (Clinton: 1898), 267.

²⁰Bowen, 6-7.

²¹*OR*, Series 1, 27(1):423; Ford, 267-270.

²²*OR*, Series 1, 27(2):623.

²³Lindsey and Andrews, Chapter 35.

²⁴Ford, 280.

²⁵Judkins, 60.

²⁶Rhodes, 201.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 202; Lindsay and Andrews, Chapter 35.

²⁸Rhodes, 201 – 203.

²⁹*Ibid.*; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):431.

³⁰ OR, Series 1, 27(1):427, 447.

³¹ Anthony W. McDermott, *A Brief History of the 69th Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers* (Philadelphia: D.J. Gallagher and Sons, n.d.), 28.

³² Judkins, 60.

³³ McDermott, 28; Capt. Charles H. Andrews, "Diary of the 3rd Georgia Infantry Regiment: 1861 – 1865," Don Zwemer collection, 35. Thanks to Don Zwemer, author of *For Home and Southland: A History of the 48th Georgia Infantry Regiment*, for a copy of this diary.

³⁴ Ibid., 29; OR, Series 1, 27(1):427, 432, 434.

³⁵ McDermott, 28. The particular guns referred to by McDermott were Brown's cannons abandoned in the field in front of the line. Another portion of the battery had redeployed further to the south.

³⁶ OR, Series 1, 27(1):447, 436.

³⁷ Ibid., 417. OR, Series 1, 27(2):623.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Andrews, "Diary of the 3rd Georgia Infantry Regiment," 35; Wright, "Army Correspondence."

⁴⁰ Joseph R. C. Ward, *History of the One Hundred and Sixth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, 2d Brigade, 2d Division, 2d Corps* (Philadelphia: Grant, Faires and Rodgers, 1883), 160-161.

⁴¹ OR, Series 1, 27(2):624.

⁴² Lindsey and Andrews, Chapter 35, Part 3; Ward, 161; OR, Series 1, 27(2):624-625.

⁴³ OR, Series 1, 27(1):447-448.

⁴⁴ Foote, 281.

⁴⁵ Andrews, "Diary of the 3rd Georgia Infantry Regiment," 35.

⁴⁶ Lindsey and Andrews, Chapter 35, Part 3; Charles H. Andrews, "Another Account of General Wright's Brigade at Gettysburg: Capt. Andrews' Tells Some More Incidents of the Fight," *Atlanta Journal*, March 9, 1901.

⁴⁷ Ward, 161-162. The historian of the 106th Pennsylvania claimed the regiment captured more than two hundred Georgians – a claim that is a bit exaggerated. Colonel Gibson would survive his wounds. Despite having been wounded with three balls, Gibson escaped from a Federal hospital in Baltimore on November 11, 1864. He was recaptured near Washington, D.C. on November 24. Federal authorities then incarcerated him in the Old Capital Prison before transferring him to Point Lookout, Maryland. Gibson finally received an exchange in March of 1864.

⁴⁸ John Buckley to John Bachelder, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park collection.

⁴⁹ Busey and Martin, 294.

	Strength	Losses	
Wright:	1413	696	(184k – 343w – 169c) 49.3%
3 rd Georgia:	441	219	(49k – 139w – 31c) 49.6%
22 nd Georgia	400	171	(41k – 70w – 60c) 42.8%
48 th Georgia	395	224	(70k – 97w – 57c) 56.7%
2 nd Georgia Bttn.	173	82	(24k – 37w – 21c) 47.4%

⁵⁰ OR, Series 1, 27(2):624-625; Wright, "Army Correspondence."

⁵¹ Lindsey and Andrews, Chapter 35, Part 3.

⁵² OR, Series 1, 27(2):623.

⁵³ Wright, "Army Correspondence;" Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968; reprint, Morningside Books, 1979), 422; Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The Second Day* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 389.

⁵⁴ Judkins, 58; OR, Series 1, 27(2):623. Later in the war, Victor Jean Baptiste Girardey made the highest single progression in rank within the Confederate army during the Civil War. For his valor and leadership displayed during the Battle of the Crater, Girardey jumped from the rank of captain to brigadier general. He held the rank for only thirteen days before being killed. Warner, 105-106.

⁵⁵ A.R. Wright to W. H. Taylor, April 30, 1864, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park collection.

⁵⁶ Coddington, 421-422; Pfanz, 389; John Buckley to John Bachelder, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park collection; Ward, 160-161.

⁵⁷ OR, Series 1, 27(2):447, 417.

⁵⁸ OR, Series 1, 27(2):623; Cadmus Wilcox, rough draft of official report, Virginia Historical Society.

⁵⁹ William B. Styple, ed., *Writing and Fighting the Confederate War: The Letters of Peter Wellington Alexander – Confederate War Correspondent* (Kearney, N.J.: Belle Grove Publishing, 2002), 164.

Alexander penned his article, The Great Battle of Gettysburg, for the *Savannah Republican* on July 4, 1863, and the newspaper ran the story on July 20, 1863.

⁶⁰H. A. Hebert to E. P. Alexander, August 18, 1903, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Maurice S. Fortin, ed., “Col. Hilary A. Herbert’s History of the 8th Alabama Volunteer Regiment, C.S.A.,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, 39 (1977), 120-121. Anderson stated in a letter dated July 31, 1863 to the *Richmond Enquirer* that Hill had “voluntarily informed me that my actions... were in strict conformity with his orders.

⁶¹Pfanz, 386-387; Campbell, 121.

⁶²Jack A. Bunch, *Roster of the Court Martial in the Confederate States Armies* (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: White Mane Books, 2001), 382; Ambrose Wright Order Book, Civil War Times Illustrated Collection – Series 2, Box 33, United States Military History Institute.

⁶³Copy of personal letter is from the John E. Divine papers.

⁶⁴This is end of newspaper account.
